

## **FAA Background Information Regarding U.S. Civil Aviation – Eastern Kenya**

Due to cross-border extremist/militant attacks originating in Somalia, there is continuing risk to U.S. civil aviation flying into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya east of 40 degrees east longitude at altitudes below Flight Level (FL) 260. As a result, on February 26, 2021, the FAA published Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) KICZ A0005/21, renewing the advisory for U.S. civil aviation to exercise caution when flying into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya at altitudes below FL260 east of 40 degrees east longitude.

While primarily active in Somalia, al-Shabaab, an al-Qa'ida-affiliated extremist/militant group, is the predominate extremist/militant threat concern in Kenya and has demonstrated its capability and intent to conduct attacks targeting Kenyan government security forces, civilians, and Western interests in Kenya, including joint civil-military airfields, primarily near Kenya's eastern border with Somalia and in the coastal region of Kenya adjacent to Somalia. The January 5, 2020, complex attack on Camp Simba, which is co-located with Manda Bay Airport (HKLJ), destroyed or damaged multiple aircraft, demonstrating the group's intent and capabilities to target the aviation sector. Al-Shabaab possesses, or has access to, a variety of weapons, including small arms; indirect fire weapons, such as mortars and rockets; and anti-aircraft-capable weapons, including man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS). Such weapons present a risk to civil aircraft operating at low altitudes, including during the arrival and departure phases of flight and/or to airports and aircraft on the ground, especially at remote airfields located east of 40 degrees east longitude. Some MANPADS have the capability to reach a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet.

Additionally, al-Shabaab likely seeks to target Western civil aviation. In December 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice announced the unsealing of an indictment charging Kenyan-national Cholo Abdi Abdullah with six counts of terrorism-related offenses arising from his activities as an al-Shabaab operative, including conspiring to hijack aircraft in order to conduct a 9/11-style attack in the United States. As alleged in the indictment, these activities included obtaining pilot training in the Philippines in preparation for seeking to hijack a commercial aircraft. This thwarted attack demonstrates al-Shabaab's continued desire to attack U.S. interests, potentially including civil aviation. The plot reinforces the United States' concerns about the risk to U.S. civil aviation in eastern Kenya in the Kenya-Somalia border region and in the coastal region of Kenya adjacent to Somalia.

Al-Shabaab has publicly declared their intent to conduct attacks in retaliation for Kenya's counter-terrorism operations in Somalia, which Kenya conducts as part of the African Union mission. Al-Shabaab may be emboldened following the announced U.S. withdrawal of forces from Somalia. In neighboring Somalia, al-Shabaab has conducted multiple attacks targeting civil aviation, including indirect fire attacks on Aden Adde International Airport (HCMM) and remote airfields where international troops are collocated. These attacks demonstrate capabilities al-Shabaab could further employ in the Kenya-Somalia border region and the coastal region of Kenya adjacent to Somalia. Al-Shabaab maintains the capability to develop concealed improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the intent to use them against civil aviation, as demonstrated by the February 2016 attack on Daallo Airlines Flight 159, involving the use of an insider to help smuggle the concealed IED onto the aircraft.

Despite Kenya's efforts to improve its security, al-Shabaab continues to plot high-profile attacks in Kenya, as demonstrated by the January 2019 attack on the DusitD2 compound and the 2013 attack

on the Westgate Mall. In addition to high-profile attacks, al-Shabaab has conducted multiple small-scale attacks against ground-based targets in eastern Kenya in the Kenya-Somalia border region.

Due to continued concerns over the risk to U.S. civil aviation in eastern Kenya in the Kenya-Somalia border region and the coastal region of Kenya adjacent to Somalia, areas in which al-Shabaab continues to operate, U.S. operators and airmen are advised to exercise caution when flying into, out of, within, or over the territory and airspace of Kenya east of 40 degrees east longitude at altitudes below FL260.

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